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TITLE: The Latina Leadership Project: A Managed Care-Inclusive Collaborative Effort to Prevent STDs/HIV in Tucson

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ISSUE: The rate of HIV infection in young Latinas in Tucson is currently low, while the rate of some other sexually transmitted diseases is very high. This scenario could lead to increasing rates of HIV infection in young Latinas.

SETTING: The target audiences are (1) 17- to 23-year-old Latinas who reside in southern Tucson and the city of South Tucson (collectively called the Southside), and (2) providers who deliver primary health care to young Latinas. Tucson is in Southern Arizona and about an hour's drive north of the Mexican border. The intervention is delivered primarily on the Southside to young Latinas and to health care providers citywide.

PROJECT: To avoid increasing HIV among Latinas, rates in the Latina Leadership Project (LLP) of the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation focuses on preventing, diagnosing and treating STDs through a collaborative effort with public health, medicine, and community based organizations (CBO). The LLP has two goals: (1) increase the ability of health plan clinicians to properly diagnose and treat STDs in young Latinas, and (2) increase young Latinas' awareness of prevalent STDs in Southern Arizona and increase their skills in avoiding STD infection. Activities in both goals include a close working relationship with the Pima County Health Department, Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona, representatives of local health plans, the Pima County Medical Society, and the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center. Goal 1 includes a variety of strategies to impact health plan clinicians including seminars and meetings with health plan administrators. Goal 2 uses a Credible Peer Leader/Diffusion Theory intervention developed by Jeffrey Kelley at the Center for AIDS Intervention Research.

RESULTS: Goal 1 has developed a 4-hour seminar that teaches clinicians how to take a sexual history. The first run of the seminar sold out to 100 clinicians and medical students. Goal 1 has also leveraged additional funding from local health plans and pharmaceutical companies. Some health plans are routinely promoting the project to their providers and to their young Latina patients. Goal 2 has trained over 50 Latinas as Credible Peer Leaders who have delivered accurate and culturally competent sexual health messages to over 500 peers.

LESSONS LEARNED: Health plans are interested in collaborations like the LLP for a number of including community relations, fiscal reasons, and accreditation requirements. The LLP's experience suggests that AIDS service organizations may be in a unique position to foster collaboration between medicine, public health, and CBOs.

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